

The eight hundred and second meeting of the Club was held on Tuesday, 25 September 1990 in the Senior Common Room, Sherfield Building, Imperial College, South Kensington at 6.15 p.m. 35 members and 26 guests attended.

Members present were: R. E. F. PEAL (*Chairman*), M. A. ADCOCK, Miss H. BAKER, B. H. BECK, R. BEECROFT, K. BETTON, Mrs D. M. BRADLEY, A. P. E. CAIN, Cdr M. CASEMENT RN, I. COLLINS, P. CONDOR, J. H. ELGOOD, S. J. FARNSWORTH, Dr C. J. FEARE, G. D. FIELD, Revd T. W. GLADWIN, D. GRIFFIN, C. A. R. HELM, Dr M. KELSEY, R. KETTLE, Revd G. K. McCULLOCH, Dr J. F. MONK, Mrs A. M. MOORE, R. MORGAN, Mrs M. MULLER, P. J. OLIVER, Dr R. P. PRYS-JONES, A. J. RANDALL, V. SAWLE, R. E. SHARLAND, P. SELLAR, N. H. F. STONE, D. TUTT, Dr A. TYE, C. A. WHEELER.

Guests present were: Dr M. R. W. RANDS (*Speaker*), Mrs B. ADCOCK, Miss S. ATTENBOROUGH, Miss Z. BALLARD, Dr J. BRADLEY, Dr C. CATCHPOLE, K. CUTTING, P. DAVIES, Miss J. EDRICH, Mrs F. M. FARNSWORTH, Mrs J. M. GLADWIN, Mrs S. GRIFFIN, M. J. D. HIRONS, N. JONES, Mrs C. KELSEY, Mrs N. LIDDELL, Mrs I. McCULLOCH, Mrs D. MONK, P. J. MOORE, C. A. MULLER, B. O'BRIEN, M. OLIVER, Mrs J. OWENS, R. RANFT, D. K. THOMAS, P. WHITTINGTON.

After supper Dr Rands, who had just returned from a visit to the Seychelles, spoke on ornithology and conservation in those islands. It is hoped to publish an account of his address in a future issue of the *Bulletin*.

Notes on the birds of the Sierra de Unturán, southern Venezuela

by George F. Barrowclough & Patricia Escalante-Pliego

Received 8 February 1990

The Sierra de Unturán, located in the Departamento Río Negro, Territorio Federal Amazonas in extreme southern Venezuela, had not been explored prior to 1989. However, during the 1989 Tapirapécó expedition (de Bellard-Pietri 1989), we briefly observed and collected over 4 days, 19–22 March, at a single site, in the vicinity of a camp at 1200 m on an east–west running ridge on this low range (1°33'N, 65°14'W). Vegetation consisted of thick, dry scrub on the south-facing slope and tall, wet forest on the north-facing slope. The locality is between the well-known major tepuis of Cerro Duida to the northwest (200 km) and Cerro de la Neblina to the southwest (180 km). Specimens are in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and the Universidad Central de Venezuela, Caracas. Here we report on records that provide a new locality for characteristic mid and upper elevational birds of the Venezuelan Pantepui (Mayr & Phelps 1967). Additional records of typical lowland species, species with broad elevational ranges, and Nearctic migrants are listed in an appendix.

Doubtless, more species will be recorded with more extensive work; nevertheless, some species that are normally abundant on the tepuis of Amazonas, e.g. *Campylopterus duidae*, *Turdus olivater* and *Atlapetes personatus*, were not found. It is possible that the limited area of habitat on this small range has been insufficient to support viable populations of the full complement of the tepui avifauna over evolutionary time. In addition, some of the habitat is restrictive; the dry scrub forest does not appear to be suitable for many of the typical Pantepui birds. Instead it contains other avian elements not routinely found at this elevation; e.g. we

collected *Formicivora grisea*, *Elaenia ruficeps* and *Hylophilus brunneiceps* in this habitat. Equally, the range being relatively low and without the extensive flat top of the classic tepuis, such low to mid elevation taxa as *Phaethornis superciliosus* and *Xiphorhynchus pardalotus* were collected at our site.

Several of the species discussed below had enlarged gonads and showed evidence of moult. This was at the beginning of the rainy season in this part of Venezuela, and the data agree with some results from the Cerro de la Neblina expedition of 1984–1985. Breeding and subsequent moult of higher elevation birds appears to be concentrated between late November and February/March (Willard *et al.* in press), before the rains.

GRAY-CHINNED HERMIT *Phaethornis griseogularis*

One was seen in humid forest. Distributed in the northern Andes and locally in the Pantepui (Meyer de Schauensee 1966), this species is known from Cerro de la Neblina (e.g. Willard *et al.* in press) and in the highlands along the Brazil–Venezuela border above the Río Siapa (Phelps & Phelps 1958), but apparently not from Cerro Duida to the north.

GREEN-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD *Amazilia viridigaster*

Found in the Colombian and Venezuelan Andes and locally in the Pantepui, this species was common at 1100 m. The male we collected was in body moult. Willard *et al.* (in press), found it common on Cerro de la Neblina at 750 m, but only occasional at 1400 m and higher. It also occurs to the north of Unturán at Cerro Duida.

BROWN-BREASTED ANTPITTA *Myrmothera simplex*

A Pantepui endemic known from all the major tepuis, this species was heard commonly in the moist forest.

RUFOUS-TAILED TYRANT *Knipolegus poecilurus*

Distributed in the upper tropical and subtropical zones of the central and northern Andes and locally in the Pantepui (Phelps & Phelps 1963). Two males were netted in dry scrub: one in fresh plumage, the other moulting its rectrices and both with enlarged gonads. Specimens are known from Cerro Duida and some of the more northerly tepuis in Amazonas; however, from Cerro de la Neblina there is only a single sight record.

RUFOUS-CROWNED ELAENIA *Elaenia ruficeps*

Distributed from central Brazil and eastern Colombia (Hilty & Brown 1986), locally through the Pantepui. Two specimens were netted in dry scrub: one, a female, had enlarged gonads; both had primary and general body moult. Not known from Cerro de la Neblina. This constitutes the southernmost record from Venezuela.

FLUTIST WREN *Microcerculus ustulatus*

A Pantepui endemic known from all the major tepuis; it was common in the understory of the moist forest. Three specimens included both a male and female with enlarged gonads; none was in moult.

BLACK-BILLED THRUSH *Turdus ignobilis*

Widely distributed at lower and mid-elevations in the Andes, southwestern Amazonia, and in the Pantepui (Phelps & Phelps 1963, Meyer de

Schauensee & Phelps 1978). It was very common in both dry and moist vegetation at 1200 m. Of 4 specimens, 2 were in moult; both sexes had enlarged gonads. There are only a few sight records from Cerro de la Neblina (Willard *et al.* in press), but the species has been collected at Cerro Duida.

BLUE-NAPED CHLOROPHONIA *Chlorophonia cyanea*

Generally distributed at mid-elevations in the Andes, southeastern Brazil, and in the Pantepui region (Ridgely & Tudor 1989), it was seen on several occasions. Known from Cerro Duida to the north (Phelps & Phelps 1963) and the Tapirapecó region to the south (Schwartz & Rivero 1979, Barrowclough & Escalante unpubl.), but surprisingly it has not been recorded from Cerro de la Neblina.

Acknowledgements

The Tapirapecó expedition was made possible through the Fundación para el Desarrollo de las Ciencias Físicas, Matemáticas y Naturales (FUDECI) of Venezuela. Expedition leader Eugenio de Bellard-Pietri, camp director Pedro Pérez-Ramírez, Charles W. Myers and the Venezuelan camp workers were especially helpful in making our work possible. Funds for our participation in the expedition were made available through a grant from the Phipps Foundation. We thank Jay Cole, Carol Townsend and Marcino Padamo for assistance in the field. David E. Willard offered useful comments on this manuscript.

References:

- de Bellard-Pietri, E. 1989. *Venezuela Tierra Magica. Tapirapecó: La Gran Aventura del Sur*. Corpoven, S.A., Caracas.
- Hilty, S. L. & Brown, W. L. 1986. *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Princeton Univ. Press.
- Mayr, E. & Phelps, W. H., Jr 1967. The origin of the bird fauna of the south Venezuelan highlands. *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 136(5): 269–328.
- Meyer de Schauensee, R. 1966. *The Species of Birds of South America*. Acad. Nat. Sci., Philadelphia.
- Meyer de Schauensee, R. & Phelps, W. H., Jr 1978. *A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela*. Princeton Univ. Press.
- Phelps, W. H. & Phelps, W. H., Jr 1958. Lista de las aves de Venezuela con su distribución. No passeriformes. *Bol. Soc. Venez. Cien. Natur.* 20(90): 1–317.
- Phelps, W. H. & Phelps, W. H., Jr. 1963. Lista de las aves de Venezuela con su distribución. Passeriformes. 2nd. Ed. *Bol. Soc. Venez. Cien. Natur.* 24(104 & 105): 1–479.
- Ridgely, R. S. & Tudor, G. 1989. *The Birds of South America. Vol. 1. The Oscine Passerines*. Univ. Texas Press.
- Schwartz, P. & Rivero, R. A. 1979. *La Distribución de las Aves en el T. F. Amazonas*. Minist. Ambiente Recur. Natur. Renov., Caracas.
- Willard, D. E. *et al.* in press. The Birds of Cerro de la Neblina. *Fieldiana*.

Address: George F. Barrowclough & Patricia Escalante-Pliego, Department of Ornithology, American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, NY 10024, U.S.A.

APPENDIX

Lowland, broad elevational and Nearctic migrant species also collected on the Sierra de Unturán, Venezuela, March 1989.

<i>Phaethornis superciliosus</i>	<i>Catharus minimus</i>
<i>Xiphorhynchus pardalotus</i>	<i>Hylophilus brunneiceps</i>
<i>Formicivora grisea</i>	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>
<i>Xenopipo atronitens</i>	<i>Piranga rubra</i>
<i>Myiarchus tuberculifer</i>	<i>Tachyphonus phoenicius</i>